

# Board Policy

Code No. 603.8R2

## **RELIGION & PUBLIC SCHOOLS REGULATION** **Religions in the Curriculum**

The Bettendorf Community School District is neutral with respect to matters of religion.

The District's policy requires that there be no preference shown for any one religion. There shall be no preference of religion over non-religion or non-religion over religion. The District's policy does not mean indifference. It supports teaching about religions in the context of the district's curriculum, but not the sponsorship of the practice of a religion.

The District may offer instruction about religions and the role and influence of religion in history, literature, art, music, science, or any other area of study in which religion has played a role, but at no time should any religion or any non-religion be promoted.

It is essential that teachers deal with religion honestly, fairly and forthrightly in the interest of education in order to produce informed and tolerant individuals.

The district's policy of being neutral with respect to matters of religion is to be applied through its educational programs in such a way that:

- a) All instructional and other school-sponsored activities should meet the three-part test established by the Supreme Court to determine constitutionality:
  - 1) The activity must have a secular purpose;
  - 2) The activity's principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances or inhibits religion; and
  - 3) The activity must not foster an excessive governmental entanglement with religion.
- b) A student shall not be singled out on the basis of religion.
- c) When religion is included in the curriculum, the focus will be on the study of what people believe, but must not be on teaching a student what to believe. The purpose is to educate, not convert. The effort is an academic one, not a devotional one.
- d) Tolerance of various religious beliefs is to be encouraged to enhance understanding that tolerance is an important aspect of a pluralistic and democratic society.
- e) When possible, the scheduling of special events shall be avoided on major religious holidays or observances.
- f) A pupil's absence from school for religious observances shall be recognized as an excused absence. The school district will attempt to be sensitive to the traditional religious practices of students enrolled in its schools. It is the responsibility of the parent or student to communicate with the teacher, coach, or principal when religious observances will interfere with attendance at school or school activities.
- g) The Bettendorf Community School District will make every attempt to arrange curricular and extra-curricular schedules to avoid conflict with regular gathering times or special observances of the religious and faith traditions represented among its students. Should unavoidable scheduling conflicts occur and should students choose to honor their religious or faith tradition commitment(s), students will not be penalized, chastised, or denied future full participation because of their choice(s).

Bettendorf Community School District  
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